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Messages of Hope

By Christopher A. Lavelle

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTERS OF FINE ARTS

MFA Imaging Arts/Computer Animation

SCHOOL OF FILM AND ANIMATION

ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

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Committee Members

Malcolm Spaul, Thesis Chair

Cathleen Ashworth, Committee Member

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- **Abstract**

This completed 30-minute documentary is a true story that covers a period of 10 years in the life of retired Navy Commander Suzanne Giesemann. As the aide to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Commander Suzanne Giesemann shook hands with Presidents, kings and queens, but was also a personal witness to the horrors of 9/11. This, followed by a family tragedy, led her to investigate areas of reality beyond anything she had ever known. The story of this 180-degree life transition to her current work as author, inspirational speaker, spiritual teacher and evidential medium is uniquely intriguing, inspiring and comforting.

Research: Finding a story to tell

It is often said that “when one door closes another one opens”. That’s what happened to me when I eventually found the story for this thesis.

Coming into my spring semester of my second year I knew what I wanted to propose for my thesis but first I had to get the subjects involved to grant permission for their story to be told. A few years prior my wife and I visited my parents in Florida. They live a few minutes down the road from The Villages. The Villages was created as a planned community for people over 55 years old. Today there are close to 100,000 people living in this totally planned and orchestrated leisure world of retirement activities. This place was not what I had pictured retirement to be. I was used to seeing grandparents sitting around the house all day. The residents of The Villages are extremely active; they have athletic teams, activity clubs, 44 golf courses and even have their own college campus for people who want to participate in continuous learning across a huge spectrum of subject options. This idea of people who were retired from their careers and from hands-on parenting activities, and were now looking to start over and be fully engaged in a whole new set of life’s options was very interesting to me. But I guess it made sense since people are living a lot longer now. Watching these people I created a character sheet of what I wanted my main subjects to be like and contacted The Villages Management team with my proposal. The person who answered the phone liked my idea a lot. He said he had heard this same idea from almost every major broadcast company and would be willing to put me on a list, so when The Villages were ready he would contact me if all

the others declined. I told him not to worry about it and thanked him for his time. Door one officially closed.

The next day I called my mom and told her the bad news. She wasn't surprised, she had wondered why there wasn't a TV show about this place already and now she knew.

Then, she asked me what my characters were like. I was confused why she was asking this but I told her. I said I wanted my main character to be a woman in her fifties that had a fun and outgoing personality, I wanted her to be married with her husband having an opposite personality, and I wanted her to have a parent living close by so she would be a reoccurring character. I really liked the idea of the parent still acting like a parent even though everyone was over fifty. I also wanted to make sure this main character had an interesting story. My mom took the information and said I might have a main character for you, but let me check with her first and make sure she is ok with the idea of her story being told in this way. A few days later my mom called me and said a woman by the name of Suzanne Giesemann fits my character description perfectly and has agreed to me making a documentary about her. Suzanne was the former Aide to The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Chairman is the highest-ranking military official and is the direct military advisor to the President of the United States. After retiring from the military Suzanne's life turned in a very unexpected direction due to totally unforeseen circumstances. Today she is an author, evidential medium, inspirational speaker and spiritual teacher. When I heard this I was definitely interested to find out how a high level military official could end up with such a contrasting career today. When I first heard the words evidential medium I didn't even know what that was, I had heard of

psychic but not medium. Then I had to ask myself do I really believe in this sort of thing. I never had any experience with it, but I was open to the possibility that it could be true. What I did have experience with, was dealing with high-ranking military officials like Commander Suzanne Giesemann and her husband Ty (Captain of a Navy destroyer). I myself had done four and half years in the Army and trusting your command was everything. Without loyalty there's nothing. So knowing Suzanne's background I was willing to learn and tell her story.

Logistics: Preproduction Planning

One of the good things about telling Suzanne's story was I wasn't the only one that was interested in it. So many people wanted to hear her story that Suzanne decided to write her memoirs. Because of this I had all the details of the story already collected and thought-out. In the semester prior to pitching my idea I took some classes on the business of Hollywood and learned about finding a location first, then creating a film that fits the genre. This really made sense to me. So I read Suzanne's story and picked out the scenes that I thought would tell a complete story in 22 minutes. I ran the selected scenes from the book by Suzanne to make sure she agreed that these were some of the most important moments in her life and told her story the way she agreed to it being told. I also decided to add two scenes that weren't in the book because I wanted to link Suzanne's story to me. I also wanted to bring up people from Suzanne's past and see what they thought of her new career. I thought that bringing in a former colleague that would also make the movie seem less biased.

Knowing that I had to shoot a lot of this material in locations that would require me to travel I wanted to have as much control over the shooting schedules as I could. That combined with the fact that all of the events that took place in Suzanne's memoirs had happened years before I met Suzanne gave me the idea of doing some reenactments. For the narration I decided to have Suzanne and all other interviews recorded in front of a black curtain so they would all look the same even though the locations they were taped in would be different. I also decided to start production as soon as possible instead of waiting until the fall of my last year.

The Fun Part: Production

First up was a scene at the Chimney Bluffs in Sodus, NY. This is a state park that overlooks Lake Ontario. Suzanne and Ty were in Croatia when they got the bad news about their daughter and this was a major turning point in their lives, so I needed to recreate Croatia without having to go there. I contacted the State Park and got a location release. This would be the first time I would meet Suzanne and Ty because they live in Florida, but were traveling through N.Y. State during the summer. I had discussed with Suzanne what I wanted to accomplish that day prior to us meeting. We were going to recreate a hike they made in Croatia and if that wasn't enough in post-production I was going to add an animated butterfly that interacted with them. The overall shoot went well, in a perfect world I would have had a generator and some HMIs lugged up to the top of the path. I tried to plan this shoot for early morning because the sun would be in the east and I knew I was going to be looking west. But the difference in the light between the trail and the horizon line was so far off that I had to make sure my Talent

was visible so I had to sacrifice the skyline. It turned out to be more blown out than I would have wanted. But, all and all the shoot was pretty painless. I was also glad to have finally met Suzanne and Ty in person. Next up was Lily Dale, NY. This is the spiritual community south of Buffalo, N.Y. where the mediums, Suzanne had met along her journey, live in the summer. I had heard that this place could be difficult to deal with as far as getting permission to shoot on location. Once again I was glad I started this project early. I contacted the Lily Dale Assembly and after a little bit of persistence I was granted permission, so that was encouraging. Now I just had to coordinate times for Suzanne and the two mediums we would be meeting. With everything going my way so far I knew I would run into a hurdle sooner or later. One of the hurdles of shooting in the summer months is the cage at school is closed so I was on my own for getting equipment. Luckily, I know some people that have their own and were willing to let me borrow what they had. We also have a production house in Rochester that rents equipment so I got in contact with them as well. I knew that doing the actual shoots alone, without any help, would be tough so I asked my friend who has been working as a cinematographer (traveling all over the country for the past eight years) to help me. The issue with bringing my friend Tim along was - he travels for his job - so it was one more schedule I had to work into the mix. We got to Lily Dale and were able to shoot two interviews and two reenactments in three locations. While there I really only ran into two issues. The first was one of my microphones was having frequency problems. When I tested it at the rental house it worked fine, but in Lily Dale it was no good. Fortunately, I planned for things like this and had back up microphones. The other issue was at one point a Lily Dale Assembly member (who wasn't aware of the fact that I had permission to shoot that

day) tried to shut me down. But again, I planned for things like this and had an email from another assembly member that verified my permission.

Prior to going to Lily Dale I had only met with a psychic once and I didn't get a reading. To make a long story short a friend of mine who works at one of the news affiliates was having a pet psychic on as one of her guests and needed some animals to get readings. My friend knew that my roommate at the time had a dog and asked if I would bring the dog and be on TV. The medium didn't really say anything that was profound. I think anyone could have looked at my roommates and I with the dog and guess what she came up with. So back at Lily Dale I might not have been ready to believe everything that was said but I was willing to go along with the flow because regardless of what happens it would be good for the movie. And even though I wasn't a total believer I still found myself being introduced to these mediums and wondering if they were talking to dead people around me and finding out information like the CIA does on a new person of interest. I just kept smiling and since I was never asked to leave I figured I passed all tests. The people we met were extremely welcoming and nice. They allowed us to transform their living rooms into interview sets and they were very flexible with their time. I tried to get in and out of their houses as fast as I could but I wanted to make sure I had everything I needed. At one point Tim was adjusting the camera and I was going over my notes to make sure I covered everything. Anne who was the medium we were interviewing at the time was waiting patiently for the next question when she said, "Tim your grandmother is behind you and she said she loves you." Both Tim and I looked at each other using peripheral vision and pretended like we didn't hear it. At the time I was

so focused on what I needed to get and so pushed for time I didn't have time to find out what she meant. Plus, I knew that anything that came from responding to what she said wouldn't make it into the movie. But I was quite confused why she said that to Tim. I have known Tim for many years and I would have thought that if one of his grandmothers had passed away he would have told me. So when we were packing up I called him out on it. Tim's response was what I would have expected. He said that when he left his house that morning both of his grandmothers were still alive and he had no idea what she was talking about. Then that got us thinking maybe she got us confused, because one of my grandmothers had passed away and we were standing right next to each other. I had never really thought about that grandmother because she passed away before I was born so I never knew anything about her. On the ride home from Lily Dale I did start to wonder if she was still around or was Anne just rolling the dice and saw two young guys and figured if either one of these two had lost anyone chances are it was a grandparent.

The next set of shoots I planned was in and around Arlington, VA. This was by far the toughest to plan. Here, we wanted to set up an interview with one of Suzanne's former military colleagues and do a reenactment of when she "came out of the closet" and told him she is now working as a medium. This is one of the most dramatic scenes in the movie for me, and I thought it was really important because the former colleague represented people that may not believe in Suzanne's new line of work - but this man had first hand knowledge of her background, so it was very important to see his opinion of this new information about her.

From the beginning of this project I tried to set up the reenactments in the places where the actual events happened with the actual people. So to accomplish this I needed to contact every upscale restaurant in Arlington and ask them if I could shoot my scene in their restaurant. This led me down the road to a lot of NOs. But funnily enough, the first restaurant I contacted, which was a Ruth's Chris said "yes", they just took three months to say it. Just prior to hearing back from Ruth's Chris I was looking to shoot at another restaurant that agreed to let me shoot two months prior and the week before cancelled on me. So, when Ruth's Chris called me a day later to say it was ok for me to shoot I was pretty happy. A lot of the issues I ran into in the VA shoots was to do with lack of location scouting. I had no idea what I was getting into as far as where I would be able to set up the interview or how the restaurant was laid out. For the interview I got stuck shooting in a conference room that had a giant table in the middle of it that we couldn't move. So I did the best I could in creating separation between the lights, background, talent, and camera. The other issue I had was in all the planning I forgot to bring an xlr cable so I had no way of connecting the wireless microphone receiver to the camera. Fortunately, the camera had a shotgun microphone on it and I was still able to get decent sound. All in all I was not really pleased with how this interview turned out. But, I thought the restaurant scene worked great. So after we were done in Arlington my friend Tim, Ty, Suzanne and myself headed an hour and a half south to where their sailboat was being docked. The sailboat had a new owner at this point - so I had to get permission from him to shoot on his boat, and we had to coordinate with his schedule, which was complicated because he is a commercial pilot. So we got to Liberty, which is the sailboat,

and we began shooting another reenactment scene that would later have an animation added to it. Shooting on a sailboat, even one that is 46ft long is a challenge. Especially trying to get what I needed without getting other production equipment or people in the shots. Because Suzanne and Ty didn't own the boat anymore we didn't have unlimited time and for a lot of this shoot it was one shot to get the take right.

By this time it was the beginning of September and my last year at RIT had begun. I had most of my shooting done, but I still needed to get interviews from Suzanne, Ty, and everyone in Florida that is part of Suzanne's new life. This again required a lot of planning because I needed to get a bunch of people in Florida on the same weekend to get a few more reenactments and interviews. Two of the main challenges this time around were time and equipment. We only had two days to get everything we needed to shoot and I had to coordinate getting equipment. Since it would be too expensive and risky to ship equipment from Rochester I thought it would be a great idea to just rent down in Florida. So I looked up production houses in Florida and because I had a little bit of luck on my side or so I thought, it turns out that there is one 15 minutes from Suzanne's house. I contacted the owner and asked if I could rent some equipment. So on Friday, October 21st at 7:30pm Tim and I grabbed all the gear we could take as carry on and headed to Florida. All of these shoots that required Tim and I to travel out of state were tough because we both have very busy fulltime jobs. I would have to coordinate these kinds of shoots on weekends. I would always try to add time where if something went wrong I wouldn't run out of time. We finally got to where we were staying in Florida around 1am on Saturday. I had planned for a 9am equipment pick up, so when I called the person I

was renting from at 8am to make sure everything was still ok I found out that some of the equipment wasn't 15 minutes away anymore, it was now an hour and a half away. By picking up this equipment I set myself back 3 hours. Once we had all the equipment we were able to start shooting. First we had to visit a veteran's cemetery in Florida where I was able to get some shots of the tombstones and my opening shot for the whole movie. After we were done at the cemetery we headed to Suzanne and Ty's house where we conducted an interview with Ty, some of the people Suzanne gave readings to, and finally Suzanne. My plan was to have Suzanne narrate most of the story and have everyone else reinforce what she was saying or help progress the story along. One of these people was my mom. She had received a reading from Suzanne a year prior to me making this movie. That was how she and I met Suzanne. My mom got a reading from her after my step dad passed away. I wanted my mom to be the person I showed Suzanne giving a reading too because I wanted to link the film to myself somehow and I thought that since this is a personal situation that my mom would be the most comfortable with me taping the session. I felt if I was dealing with someone else I wouldn't be able to get as candid a performance. We went through the reading a few times. I felt bad having my mom do the same thing over and over again and it definitely wasn't fun watching her cry. But, I knew that this scene would resonate with a lot of people, so I wanted to make sure it was believable.

Putting it all together: Post Production

Now that I had all my footage captured I needed to continue editing and put everything together. I say continue editing because this whole time I had been working on the

reenactments I shot. I did this for two reasons. The first was some of my scenes required special effects so I needed to get them completed so the animators could do their part. The second was - I wanted to have a good idea of the timeframe I was dealing with, so when I went down to Florida to shoot of Suzanne's interview I had an idea of how much of my time limit was already taken up.

The foundation of this movie was narrative, so the first thing I wanted to do was lay down all of Suzanne's narrations. By doing this I had a really good idea of how long the movie was going to be. Originally in my proposal I went for 22 minutes. That was way too little time to establish Suzanne's transition and not confuse the viewer. I needed to ask for the total time of the movie to be extended and I was allotted 8 more minutes. After I had all of Suzanne's audio I started editing what was left of my reenactments and collecting home movies and photographs from Suzanne. Once I realized how much home movie footage I had I decided to use it as the base for what my movie would look like. I wanted to mix scenes that I shot with the footage that Suzanne shot, to make the movie feel more personal. One thing I didn't like about Suzanne's footage was that it was shot in 4x3 so I came up with the idea to put a mask around to make it look like old projection film. I decided to stay with this look from the beginning of the movie until just after the climax. For the rest of the movie I decided to switch to Full Frame, because from this point on I would be only using reenactments, which had all been shot in HD 16x9. I also made the switch at this point because in the movie we were now in the year 2006 and since I was trying to give the feeling that all of this footage came from Suzanne

I thought that by this time it would make sense that she would have an HD camera to shoot home movies.

After I had everything picture locked and liked the way the movie flowed I still had a major issue to deal with. The movie was 45 minutes long. The only way I could get the movie down to 30 minutes was to remove 3 scenes and to shorten all the existing scenes. This was tough because I knew there was a lot going on in the movie and I needed to make sure that the movie had a very clear beginning, middle, and end. And more importantly I needed to make sure the story still made sense with or without the missing material. This required a lot of going back and forth between scenes and cutting a line here and there. One of the scenes that I had to cut in full was when Suzanne reunites with a former colleague and tells him that she is now a medium. I liked this scene a lot, but there was no way I could shorten it and establishing whom this former colleague was. The other scene was an interaction between Suzanne and a medium in Lily Dale. Taking this scene out improved the movie in my opinion because I think the two Lily Dale scenes accomplished the same thing. But if I had more time I would have liked to keep the Ruth's Chris scene because I think it added to Suzanne's credibility. Without this scene we never get to see what someone from Suzanne's past thinks of her new life. It was tough to get rid of the Ruth's Chris scene but I had to do it because of time. There was no other areas of the movie I could cut as cleanly.

In addition to editing I was also working with animators. I needed three scenes to have animated butterflies added and I needed to have a person removed from one of the shots

that Suzanne provided. All of this required a lot of back and forth until we had everything looking how I wanted it. The removing of the person was a crazy task, but much needed. There is a shot where Suzanne is narrating about a dream she had where her stepdaughter walks up to her. Suzanne provided me with less than two minute of footage of her stepdaughter. In one of the shots her stepdaughter walks right up to the camera. This shot was meant to be, it matched the narration perfectly. The problem with this shot was that there was a person in the video that there was no way I could show him and because this was a dream blurring out his face looked ridiculous. The animator that was assigned to this was finally able to get the shot looking acceptable using rotoscoping and motion tracking techniques.

Having worked as an editor for a few years I knew the life of an editor is long hours and long nights. But, editing this movie between having a full time job and all my responsibilities in the rest of my life proved to be a bit pressing at times. I really enjoyed putting this movie together but I am glad that it's finished.

Adding Music & Mixing: Post Audio

In February, I had everything finally picture locked and at 30 minutes. This was great because I had wanted to have time to add music and have a sound student mix all the audio together and level everything out. This turned out to take a little longer than I had expected. First was adding the music, which was mainly donated by two musicians. I had 7 CDs of music from one artist and two songs from another to work with. It took a lot of trial and error to finally find bits and pieces of songs to fit the movie. The one place

where I couldn't get any of this music to work was the intro. There was just too many emotionally changes to use a prerecorded song. I needed to have someone compose something custom. I had some people in mind but none of them were able to help. Not knowing what to do and time running out I typed into Google, "Documentary Composer looking for work." I came across a few blogs and within one of those blogs I found a name of a music editor. I contacted her on a whim and asked her to compose a custom track, with little time and little money. Fortunately, she agreed to do it and I now had music throughout my whole movie.

Now that the music was taken care of I wanted a sound student to mix everything together. At this point I had everything the way I wanted it. However, there was humming noise in some of the narration. This turned out to be a major pain to adjust because you want to remove or lower the frequency levels where the hum exists but if you adjust too much you change the way the person speaking sounds. This was like a lot of the editing process in that it took a lot longer than expected but finally got fixed to a point that I could live with.

Screening The Movie:

One of my favorite parts about making a movie is seeing how people will react to it. During the screening I was more interested in watching the audience than watching the movie. I wanted to see how they would react to the flow and scenes. Looking around the room I saw several people wiping their eyes throughout the sad parts and laughing when it was appropriate. Still being somewhat new to making movies I think being able to get

someone so involved in the movie that they would laugh or cry is pretty incredible. When I see people being moved like that I know I did a good job.

Before I screened the movie at RIT I had the opportunity to screen the movie down in Florida where Suzanne and Ty live. We held a private screening at one of the movie theatres down there and invited all the people that were involved in making the movie. Most of them showed up and around 290 others. The movie theatre was packed. I was excited to see almost every seat filled, but I was a little nervous to see how the people that were in the movie would react, especially Ty and Suzanne. Like I said earlier when the movie was playing I scanned the theatre back and forth watching for reactions.

During the really emotional parts and reenactments I paid close attention to Suzanne and Ty. I really wanted to make sure I got as close to what really happened as possible and even more than that - I wanted to make sure the scene made people feel the way the subjects on screen did.

At the end of both viewings the room was opened up for discussion. I had to listen to some audience comments and answer a few questions. At the Florida screening Suzanne opened up the Q&A by making a few comments. She said that the movie told her story in a way that did not sensationalize the subject matter and that she greatly appreciated that. The story was told the way the events actually happened. She said watching some of the movie was tough because it was so real to herself and Ty; it put them back in time as if they were reliving the moment. For me this was great to hear because all I wanted to do was show Suzanne's transition in a way that would not be confusing and make her a

credible and likeable person. The kind of person that after the movie was over people would be willing to listen to more of what she has to say. At no point did I ever try to prove that mediumship was real. At the RIT screening the audience reaction was the same. People liked the flow of the movie and really felt like they got to know Suzanne and Ty. I was also told that there were a few technical parts that still need to be tweaked, like the audio being loud in a few spots. But, all and all the movie was enjoyable to watch.

Conclusion

When I was first presented with Suzanne's book, I was interested in the opportunity to tell such a unique story. I wanted to know how someone who spent their whole life and career living in a world that was so black and white could transition into the complete opposite and now lives a life revolved around that which can not be physically seen. In telling her story I wanted to make sure that she came across as a likeable and credible person. Fortunately her background had her working with a lot of high profile people which I think helped because I still wasn't sure how some people would handle Suzanne ending up being a medium. I wanted to tread on this topic lightly and show a gradual progression. I wanted to foreshadow the mediumship, but not give it away. One of the ways I tried to throw people off was by showing my mom at a military cemetery in the opening scene. I was hoping that people would see the cemetery scene and then Suzanne's military career and think it was like a lot of other military movies. Someone joins up, goes to war, gets killed in action, and the movie follows the impact of this person and the people they left behind, which of course is not this story at all. I liked the

idea of adding my mom and stepfather to the story because the role they played in supporting my career at RIT was very similar to the role they played in the movie. My parents were very supportive in encouraging me to enroll in the program. They were also very proud when I got in. My stepfather passed away right after school started. He was someone, who without his guidance, I would have never gotten the chance to attend RIT. So, I think that it was very fitting that in my final project he got to play a role and had the movie dedicated to his Memory.

- **Appendices**
- Appendix - Proposal
- Appendix – Timeline
- Appendix – Budget
- Appendix – Production Stills
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Messages of Hope

A Documentary Thesis Proposal
By
Chris Lavelle

Approved by Malcolm Spaul April 26, 2011

Thesis Proposal Date:

Friday, April 29, 2011 at 11:30 AM

Synopsis

This proposal is for a documentary film that is 22 minutes in length about the reinvention of one's life. Some people are forced into reinventing themselves and others choose too. But, both require a process of learning and accepting this metamorphosis.

As the director of the film I will show the transformation of Suzanne Giesemann, a former aide to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and 20-year veteran of the U.S. Navy and her husband Ty, a former Captain of a US Navy destroyer. The transformation that was decided for them was not one that they chose. For Suzanne and Ty being life long members of the Naval Service they wanted to sail around the world and unwind from all the stress that high ranking careers in the military causes. Unfortunately, their trip was cut short when they were informed that their daughter Susan was struck by lightning and killed while on active duty in the Marine Corp. The death of their youngest daughter (who was 6 months pregnant with their first grandchild) devastated them, especially Ty. Everything about Suzanne and Ty's life changed. Suzanne now works in an area that she would never have imagined being a part of. Her Captain of a Navy Destroyer Ship husband would have verified this point of view – simply not something they have any inclination towards or connection to - would have been his perspective. But, this 180-degree swing did happen and the fascinating story of why and how will be the content of my documentary. I will also tie in how Suzanne's current career choice has positively affected someone in my life.

Treatment

It is late in the afternoon and a woman is standing in front of a tombstone in a veteran cemetery. Suzanne Giesemann is sitting in her house in Florida looking through photographs from when she was in the Navy. She explains her experience being the aide to the Joint chief of Staff during September 11th. Suzanne and Ty since their retirement spend a lot of their time on their sailboat. Their plan for retirement was to sail around the world. That is until their youngest daughter Susan gets struck by lightning killing her and her unborn child instantly. Ty has a hard time dealing with the death of his daughter and Suzanne is willing to do anything to try and proof to him that Susan isn't totally gone. Suzanne has always been interested in the idea of life after death but it is not something that she talks about considering her job choice and the people she calls friends. While sailing on their boat too far from land for a yellow butterfly to be present Suzanne points how a woman in one of her books noticed yellow butterflies would come to her right after she lost her son. This is the final coincidence and Suzanne convinces Ty to see a medium with her. Suzanne researches and finds the best medium in the United States and makes an effort to meet her. After Ty and Suzanne receive their reading, the evidence that is revealed to them changed their lives forever. Suzanne is now convinced that there is more to life after death. She decided to attend The Arthur Findlay College The Worlds Foremost College for the Advancement of Spiritualism and Psychic Sciences. Upon her return to the United States Suzanne continues to perfect her craft helping one person at a time connect with a loved one they have lost. Suzanne also feels it is important to inform her former co-worker about her new life. Suzanne is worried about what they will think because she has great respect for him and her creditability is

very important to her. Suzanne has also had a positive impact on someone in my life. That woman in the opening scene is my mother standing in front of my stepfather's grave. He passed away last year and Suzanne was able to tell her things only my mom and stepfather would know.

Rationale

After visiting The Villages, Florida and the people who live there I knew this was an interesting place. The people that live there are all retired, but that doesn't mean they are sitting around. The residents of The Villages are more active than most young people. This place is the inspiration for my documentary about someone reinventing herself. After I told my mom that I wanted to do a documentary about the people who lived in The Villages, she mentioned Suzanne. My mom had said that Suzanne helped her with dealing with the loss of my stepfather. She said that Suzanne was a retired veteran with 20 years in the Navy. The fact that Suzanne is still very new to this skill and is still learning to accept it makes her very interesting to me. I feel like people will have a greater chance of relating to her than someone that has been working as a medium or psychic for years.

Style

All the interviews will be shot with a black curtain in the background. This will give the feeling of infinite black and will offer continuity amongst all the interviews. National Geographic films use this style of interviewing in a lot of their films. The outdoor shots will be done with natural lighting. The style of this documentary will look like an ESPN

30for30 and ESPN E60 Film. The scenes where Suzanne and Ty are interacting will be shot documentary style as if they are happening for the first time. There will be no flash backs, the documentary will flow from September 2001 to September 2010.

Logistics

I will shoot the film in Lily Dale, NY and Ocala, FL. I have made arrangements to have housing and transportation while in Florida. I plan on shooting with a Panasonic HXV200. I will be doing my own cinematography while in Florida. I have received permission from Suzanne Giesemann and her husband Ty to film them on their boat and in their home. I am working on setting up arrangements to meet with the other interviewees. Suzanne is submitting footage that she owns from her time in the military and of the time her and Ty were sailing across the Atlantic when they found out about Susan. I am working on getting footage from the Arthur Findlay College at Stansted Hall. I also have housing and transportation set up for my visit to Washington D.C. if necessary. I might also purchase stock footage for this rather than going to the Capital.

Appendix – Timeline

May – June

In June Suzanne will be handing over all of her military footage as well as the footage from her sailing trip.

July

I will be meeting with Janet Nohavec for an interview

August

I will be meeting with Ann Gehman in Lily Dale, NY for an interview

September – December

During the fall and early winter I will travel to Florida to shot the majority of the film.

January

The bulk of the editing will be done in January. But I plan on editing throughout the year as I get footage.

February

Screen a rough draft of the film.

Have a musical composer music for the film.

March - May

Continue with post-production where necessary.

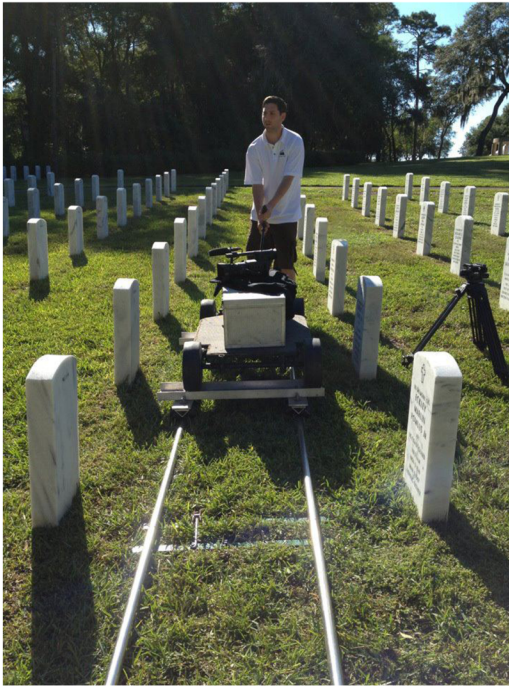
Screen Final

Appendix – Budget

Account #	Account Descriptions	Quantity	Fee	Subtotal	Account Total
100	Story	1	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
200	Talent				
	Director/ Producer	1	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
300	Production Personnel				
	Camera Operator	1	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
400	Travel and Location				
	Plane Flights	3	\$296	\$888	\$888
	Flight Insurance	1	\$28.50	\$28.50	\$28.50
	Flight Reschedule	1	\$70	\$70	\$70
	Airport Parking	1	\$23	\$23	\$23
	Flight Luggage	2	\$25	\$50	\$50
	Gas			\$196.61	\$196.61
500	Production Equipment				
	Camera	1	\$100	\$100	\$100
	Microphones	2			\$323
	Microphone Cables	1	\$29.90	\$29.90	\$29.90
	Grip Equipment			\$400	\$400
600	Art Direction		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
700	Recording Media				
	P2 Cards		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
800	Sound and Music				
	Composer	1	\$250	\$250	\$250
900	Editing and Finishing				
	Editor	1	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
	Hard Drive	1		\$152.52	\$152.52
				Total	\$2511.53

Appendix – Production Stills





Appendix – Movie Stills



